



Winter 2005

Canberra Organic

ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

In this issue:

Kambah community garden; Getting rid of couch grass; Winter vegetable planting guide; Joyce Wilkie on planting for the Canberra climate; NASAA: early days; Farmers' Markets; Organic garden in Victoria; AGM reports insert for members.



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CANBERRA ORGANIC

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From the Editor



First of all, congratulations to COGS Life Member Betty Cornhill on being made a Life Member of NASAA. You can read about this on page 13, and starting on page 14 Betty has potted up for us some of the early history of COGS involvement in the establishment of NASAA.

I am very happy to report that I have held over material I had planned for inclusion in this issue because our local writers have sent us so many wonderful items—thank you! Several Kambah community gardeners have given us their stories (pages 7-9), and couch grass features as a perennial problem. Beby Bros has some answers on couch (page 11). Ben Bradey has written about farmers' markets (page 16) and Alan Robertson, Convener of Cook garden, tells us about the Slow Food movement (page 24) as well as adding his comments on composting (page 26). Thanks also to Ray Harber for writing about seed saving and seed exchange (page 23).

In addition to the Winter Planting Guide (page 27) we have a summary of Joyce Wilkie's recent address to COGS on planting for the Canberra climate (page 20) and her Asian Greens guide (page 21). The Winter issue traditionally includes our Annual General Meeting reports and these are provided as an insert for members.

I hope you will also enjoy the article about the beautiful garden in Victoria that I visited over Easter (page 18). I have been inspired to build a large compost heap that is heating up nicely.

We have some very good speakers lined up for COGS general meetings (see page 31)—noting in particular that we are lucky enough to have Jackie French speak to us at the October meeting. In addition farm visits are scheduled for July to Loriendale Orchard (a special notice is on page 26) and we are hoping to have a visit to Allsun Farm in late August. Please support these COGS activities, and if possible help COGS Backyard at Xeriscape Gardens (pages 5, 23) or the community groups seeking COGS assistance (page 31).

Enjoy your magazine.

Janet Popovic



From the President Winter 2005

Another Summer growing season is drawing to a close with frosts already experienced in some parts of Canberra. Despite the difficulties of working with Stage 3, then Stage 2 water restrictions most gardeners have had another successful season and good harvests. Thanks to the prolonged warm Autumn this year some gardeners have even produced large crops of snake beans and rockmelons.

As I harvest the pumpkins and the last of the tomatoes, capsicums and zucchinis I reflect on the amazing quantity and variety of fruits and vegetables a community garden plot can produce and how lucky I am to have access to this resource. COGS, and its gardens, exists only because of the vision, enthusiasm and effort of its founders and members over the past twenty seven years, and their commitment to fostering local organic food production. As the caretakers of this wonderful legacy it's up to us, the current members, to ensure that COGS continues to thrive and grow.

Following the AGM on March 22 there are several new faces on the committee. We welcome Michelle West as Treasurer, Jen Johnston as Membership Secretary and Steve Dangaard as a committee member. Ben Bradey is continuing as Secretary, Janet Popovic as Editor and Beby Bros as Librarian.

This gives us a committee of seven which is about the minimum number possible if we are to have quorums and holidays at the same time! If you've ever considered joining the committee or simply wondered what it does why not come along to a meeting and see for yourself.

As a volunteer organisation COGS can only continue to function if members volunteer to do the necessary work. The jobs which currently fall on too few shoulders include:

- Planting, maintenance and even harvesting at the 'COGS Backyard' demonstration garden in Weston

- Folding and/or distributing the quarterly magazine
- Lining up (or simply suggesting) interesting speakers for our monthly meetings
- Running stalls at various public events around Canberra
- Growing seedlings for sale to members at meetings and on our stalls
- Growing out seeds for the seed bank.

Of course, there is also the need for a couple more committee members. If you can spare a few hours a month and any of these jobs interest you please don't hesitate to contact either myself or another committee member. (Committee contact details are on page 28.)

This year as well as continuing all our regular activities we have arranged a couple of farm visits for members. Following on from the talk he will give on fruit tree pruning at the June meeting, Owen Pidgeon has invited members for a Saturday afternoon of practical pruning experience in his orchard. In late August Joyce Wilkie and Michael Plane will host an open day at Allsun Farm for COGS members. Both these days promise to be very interesting and informative and I encourage members to attend.

In late Spring another three of the community gardens will be open for members to visit. Those members who took the opportunity to visit Cook, Kambah or Cotter in February, March and April commented on how interesting it was to see how others managed their gardens and the great variety of vegetables and fruits that were being grown.

Finally, on behalf of COGS, I would like to thank Martin Butterfield and the other retiring committee members for the time and effort they have put into the smooth running of COGS.

Adrienne Fazekas

Contents



President's Report Winter 2005 <i>Adrienne Fazekas</i>	3	COGS Winter Vegetable Planting Guide	27
Around the Gardens, <i>Garden Conveners</i>	5	COGS Committee and Helpers & <i>Canberra Organic Quick Quiz</i>	28
Kambah Community Garden, <i>Shirley Irvin</i>	7	COGS Inc. Information	29
Couch! Couch! and more Couch! <i>Beby Bros</i>	11	Membership Application/Renewal Form	30
Congratulations Betty!	13	COGS Notice Board	31
Letter to NASAA, <i>Betty Cornhill</i>	13	Answers: <i>Canberra Organic Quick Quiz</i>	31
NASAA: Early Days <i>Betty Cornhill</i>	14	Alphabetical Index of Advertisers: <i>When you use the services of our advertisers, please let them know you saw their ad in Canberra Organic.</i>	
Farmers' Markets—the vital link between producer and consumer, <i>Ben Bradey</i>	16	ABC Organic Gardener Magazine	10
Annual General Meeting 2005 (Reports) - insert for members		Allsun Garden Farm	20
Gwandalan—Haven of Plenty, Organically Grown, <i>Janet Popovic</i>	18	Eco Meats	6
Joyce Wilkie talks to COGS about planting for Winter produce	20	Gastro-Gnome Gloves	15
Library Report	22	Holiday house	12
Seed Saving, <i>Ray Harber</i>	23	Mooble	6
Xeriscape Gardens—COGS Backyard	23	NASAA	25
Slow Food—The End of the Organic Food Chain? <i>Alan Robertson</i>	24	Sapphire Coast Producers	20
Harvest Night and Open Day photos	25	Barbara Schreiner, <i>Backyard Food</i>	24
Organic Tips and Techniques	26	<i>Cover photo: Charnwood garden visitors to Cook garden open day, 27 February 2005. Photo by JP.</i>	
Loriendale Farm Visit 9 July 2005	26	<i>Back cover: Left to right—Japanese turnips, Cook garden, planted after Joyce Wilkie's talk; Jackson's new garden bed at Cotter garden prepared for over- wintering; Peas flourishing in Cook in April. Centre photo by Betty Cornhill; others by JP.</i>	

Do you have an interest in the history and art of preserving foods?

Do you have old books, jars, lids, clips (in particular 2 ½" and 3 ½" lids and clips and jars no.10, 14, 19)?

If so please contact Lesley Pattinson, phone 6288 0293

Lesley Pattinson is a COGS member who has made a major contribution growing bulk tomato seedlings of many varieties for sale at our Spring plant sales at Xeriscape and COGS meetings and has been an active member of the Phoenix Garden Group. She has a keen interest in the history and art of preserving and has won an award or two in this area at Canberra Shows. JP.



Around the Gardens



Cook

The sudden arrival of cool Autumn weather after possibly record breaking warmth in April has slowed the rate of planting of Autumn and Winter vegetables. However, the garden is looking in good shape and should be quite productive over the coming months.

We have just let our last available plot and the garden is fully occupied for the first time. We have two plots of well compacted clay that we have covered thickly with straw. These will be used as a potato patch next Spring and Summer then made available to new gardeners around this time next year.

Alan Robertson

Dickson

Dickson has had a most unseasonable growing season—tree roots invading the beds and compost area, plague proportions of grasshoppers, seeds germinating but then being eaten by birds and other pests, a hailstorm which destroyed flowers and seedlings—it is surprising that we still were able to harvest at all. We have put the disappointment behind us and are now concentrating on growing winter food and flowers.

We still have room for one or two people who would like to share the garden with us.

Beby Bros

Holder

Many summer crops have finished (finally) with our first frost on 30 April. Handsome capsicums and chillies, fragrant basil, cucurbits and colourful flowers were reduced to tatty blackened rags on sticks or soft shapeless mulch. However despite the continuing drought and the challenging local conditions since the 2003 bushfire, some members have fine crops of brassicas, leeks, carrots, lettuces and other leafy greens coming along for winter supplies. Green manure crops have also been planted and other patches sheet mulched by some gardeners in anticipation of rain and

better soil fertility for the next lot of warm weather crops.

There are some vacant plots if you would like to join us at Holder. A wonderful source of local knowledge and advice for newer members is provided by some of our more active gardeners, many having been growers since the garden started. Happy gardening.

Jane Andrews & Jen Johnston, co-conveners.

Kambah

See the wonderful stories of Kambah gardeners on pages 7-9 of this magazine.

Northside

As the days grow shorter and colder, it's time to reflect back on the summer growing season. It wasn't all that bad after all. Everybody harvested a bounty of tomatoes, corn and beans. Cucumbers didn't seem to do all that well and my snake beans (which need a warm summer) didn't get a chance to ripen before the first frosts put an end to it all for another year. The clever gardeners put aside some space for winter vegetables in late January/early February. Their early sowings are already beginning to come into harvest and will ensure a continual supply as the plants go into a state of 'suspended animation' during the deep freeze.

The less organised gardeners, such as myself, missed the boat and planted our winter vegetables too late. We may still be lucky as the warm-ish autumn has seen good growth and our plants are not far behind the early sowers. Joyce Wilkie's talk on Asian vegetables at the February meeting came a few weeks too late for me to organise seed and space in the garden to try out the wonderful new world of Asian greens this winter. But I have made a note in my calendar for January next year and I'm looking forward to trying out something a bit different. *Ben Bradey*

COGS Backyard Working Bees

COGS needs your help to maintain 'COGS Backyard' as a demonstration garden for organic growing. Please come along with your gardening tools and gloves on:

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Kambah community garden



Photos page 7: Kambah community gardeners with visitors at the garden on its Open Day on 13 March

In this feature on Kambah garden we bring you four wonderful stories direct from the gardeners.

Glenda Hosking's Story

My Garden

Well, this year all I can say is—ONIONS. I have had success with all sorts. I am not often around during the times specified for watering so I thought I would experiment to find out just what did grow if I only watered weekly instead of watering every few days. I planted lots and lots of seeds and seedlings and mulched and mulched. It worked in varying degrees. At first the lettuces survived the early summer but soon disappeared when the heat really hit. The rocket did well and is just how I like it—hot and spicy. I had a limited crop of tomatoes—various varieties. There were fewer of the larger varieties, but their flavour was strong. The grape tomatoes did exceptionally well and there were heaps of those. The pulses started to grow then just disappeared. I did get a small crop of snow peas early summer. The small crop of corn which survived tasted dry and bland so definitely could have done with a lot more water.

The onions were the exception to all this struggle—they thrived. I have harvested bags and bags of them all summer and still have a large supply that will carry my family through to harvesting next year. I grew white, brown and red onions, garlic chives, leeks, shallots and garlic. I left lots of them to go to seed and I now have lots and lots of seedlings growing ready for next season. So, if you look at my block through the fence and think that I am not growing anything much, take another look, up close. I have lots of onions and you are very welcome to take some.

Keep happy,

Glenda

Steve and Donna French's Story

We started gardening a plot in the Kambah community garden in spring 2004. We had walked past the garden on many occasions and had often talked about the possibility of growing vegetables on a larger scale, as we both enjoy spending time outside and we prefer to buy organically grown produce.

We mulched and weeded the soil and planted seedlings. We enjoyed a summer crop of many peas, cobs of corn, zucchinis, potatoes, beans, spinach, and chillies and butternut pumpkins. We have also had some success in getting cabbage, broccoli, onion and silverbeet seedlings established for winter eating, but as the days get shorter, fitting in the weeding and watering around the other family activities will prove to be a challenge.

We have enjoyed our time at the Kambah community garden immensely. We have appreciated sharing ideas and hints with the other friendly folk, and we are looking forward to future good times.

Stephen and Donna



Mary Coulson's Story

Reflections on a plot

Warning: Move straight to the last paragraphs if you only want the success story.

I joined the Kambah community garden at the peak of summer January 2002 together with 11 other new starters. There was already a solid core of experienced gardeners (Heather, Tony, Lilliana, Derrick, Irma, Robert, Deirdre and Glenda) who were achieving great returns on their plots. So full of enthusiasm the 'new chums' chucked in \$14 each to hire a tractor and 3-pronged ripper to start off eight new plots. The pile of couch dragged up by the ripper was about a metre high and should have been sufficient warning, but naively I plunged in.

I sweated on the end of the mattock in the hot summer, working over the plot to remove remaining couch roots; breaking up rocks and building a little ridge down the centre of the plot with those that were too hard—I thought it may help direct run-off back to the plants.

After 50 kg of gypsum, 4 bales of lucerne and more horse manure than I care to remember, I ended by trenching in some composted vegetable matter and installed two worm feeders. I used polypipe (approx 15 cm diameter), drilled 4-5 holes at one end and inserted this into the ground so that all but the top 2 holes were covered with soil. Up-turned plastic pots became the sunshade for the worms. I added some vegetable scraps to the pipe each day I watered the plot. By 9 February it was time for the inaugural planting.

I'm still working on this plot, plus another three that I have optimistically taken on as gradually all but one of our valued 'originals' has left the gardens and there are only four left of the January 2002 starters. A combination of drought, vandals and family circumstance has unfortunately thinned our numbers. The only really consistent stayer has been the COUCH!

However, three years on I now produce nearly all our potatoes, pumpkins, tomatoes, broccoli, onions, and mixed greens (silverbeet and Asian greens) for our family of three plus regular parcels for my daughter's family of three. I also grow and freeze some broad beans, climbing beans (Stuttgart) and sweet corn to add some variety to winter meals. A small crop of raspberries and boysenberries makes a welcome contribution and these are used in muffins and hot cakes to make sure we all get our share. The rhubarb has grown well but is not a great favourite with the family.

Now for the successes—I can happily recommend bunching onions (*Allium fistulosum*), tree onions (*Allium cepa* var. *proliferum*), multiplier leeks and both garlic and onion chives as they will survive the worst neglect and still happily increase in numbers each year. They are great standbys for the salad bowl and for cooked dishes.

San Marzano tomato has proven most useful for bottling, drying and also cutting up for salads or grilled. They are large, fleshy, bell-shaped fruit, that don't seem to attract as many pests.

Italian Sprouting Broccoli (*Brassica oleracea* var. *italica*) has been wonderful. These are strong plants that don't require a lot of water once established. They produce small sprouted heads and must be picked regularly whilst small as they go to flower if left to grow larger. I have three sets of plants in the garden—last winter's plants are now flowering and going to seed, the summer crop is still producing well and will continue to produce during winter but at a slower rate, whilst the plants for the winter crop are starting to grow. This is not a large solid head broccoli but is useful for those who prefer it in stir-fry or blanched in boiling water (about 1 minute, plunge into cold water, then drain and use in salads). Once established you will never be without broccoli.

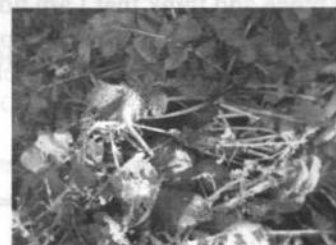
Mary



Left: Shirley Irvin, Convener of Kambah community garden.

Right: Shirley's turnips, see story on page 9.

Photos by JP.



Shirley Irvin's Story

Just over three years ago an article with a photograph in the local newspaper was my introduction to the Kambah garden, and in fact, to the Canberra Organic Growers Society. The photo was of some very lush vegetables being shown off by Heather Pearce, Convener at the time, and Tony Bray. Heather and Tony were the busy bees behind getting this garden up and running—the land area was divided into plots of varying sizes, plumbing was installed and a tall surrounding fence arranged. I have no idea where the members came from (nor where they have now gone!), however, at the time I read this newspaper article all the plots were being utilised and all had a flourishing crop. However, there was more land space for additional plots.

I discovered that I had to go on a waiting list. How disappointed did I feel! I was thinking to myself that anyone lucky enough to lease such a plot would surely hang on to it forever. To my joy, Heather phoned me very soon afterwards and advised that one small plot was vacant and that a large one might come up soon.

I busied myself clearing the couch grass (that was about half a metre tall with very long roots) and discovered some old concrete foundations *in situ*—remainders of a tank stand or something similar from the old homestead that was located on the site originally. Not to worry, I also dug up a very old horseshoe. This excited me and I believed good luck was to be had from this little plot. I planted the horseshoe into a bit of a crevice in the concrete, thinking that I would set it up later as a permanent 'adornment'.

Unfortunately it disappeared! So much for my good luck!

Finally when I had managed to clear all this couch, add some horse manure, and had the soil all beautiful and ready for planting, I was offered the very large plot that I had had my eye on from the beginning. So, the hard yakka started all over again.

The previous plot holder had laid large lengths of old rubber backed carpet, old plastic bound government documents (Acts of law, etc) and all sorts of other rubbish in an attempt to build a 'no dig' garden. On top of that had been placed soil and manure. However, as this plot had not been worked for some time, the couch grass under the carpet had decided "yes, I like this, the soil and manure above, the carpet and paper and plastic rubbish over my roots to protect me,

I'll just keep growing!" And grow it did. When I took it over, the couch grass was tall and the roots, all intertwined through the carpet and books etc, were easily up to 2 metres long, buried by about 6 inches of soil. It took me every weekend of the bitterly cold windy winter to clear all of this.

So, with my back now permanently aching, Spring time arrived. Feeling quite elated at the look and feel of my now beautiful clean and friable soil, I started planting—tomatoes, leeks, spinach, carrots, onions, lettuces, etc. That season was fantastic. A few of us purchased heavy steel mesh lengths and set each end into our garden forming an arch over which we grew beans. We experimented with several varieties and had great successes. Later I planted broad beans and these produced heaps. A year or so later I took on a second plot and planted grapes, raspberries, rhubarb, and currants, and then as the drought set in and we could not attract new gardeners, I took over a third plot, simply because it was available! Do I love gardening? Yes, just a bit. This one I filled with pumpkins and potatoes.

These successes were tempered by the regular interference of vandals who insisted on cutting into our chain-wire fence, stealing all our tools, wrecking our little shed, trampling on gardens and even stealing some produce. This has been a constant nightmare for us but we have battled on and had wonderful growing successes.

This year I grew some very large turnips and proudly took some home to grate and add to a salad only to be told by my 'other half' that he hates turnips. So I offered them to my three pet rabbits. Alas, even they sniffed and walked away with their cotton tails in the air as if to say "What the hell is she trying to feed us now?"!

Sadly the watering restrictions have taken their toll and we have lost members who have found the watering hours too restrictive. We have a number of vacant plots and others still leased but not being actively worked. Let's all pray for a good wet season next Spring and Summer.

The best part of the garden is the other members. Some wonderful special friendships have been forged with fellow gardeners who have supported me in my elected role as convener over the last two years. I have appreciated this support very much. Cheers to all COGS members,

Shirley Irvin

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Couch! Couch! and more Couch!

Dickson Community Garden was established using the no-dig method creating 5 beds approximately 2.5 sq. metres in size with narrow paths in between. Horse manure, newspapers and straw were laid directly on very dry, hard-packed ground. Seedlings of brassicas and silverbeet, which had been potted up, were transplanted in pockets of compost soil (purchased) and watered in.

The size of the garden is approximately that of the traditional backyard of a ¼ acre house block. The southern side is attached to the building; just outside the eastern fence are two small deciduous trees; outside the western fence is a clump of evergreen shrubs and another small deciduous tree; and on the northern side is a belt of trees separating the public area from a major road. This belt of trees does not cast any shadows during the summer months but has a marked effect in Autumn, Winter and Spring. Thus in this small space we have three distinct growing areas and it has been frustrating but fun as well for planning crops.

The first year was taken up by creating more beds—4 in the centre approximately 2 sq. metres and 2 larger beds assigned for communal, larger crops e.g. zucchinis, melons, potatoes etc; an old bath converted to become a frog pond surrounded by rhubarb and mint; and narrow beds along the fences to allow for the growing of climbing peas and beans (western side), cane fruits and strawberries (northern fence) and a communal herb garden (east). Although we had



Above: The pond awaiting frogs.

Photo: JP

very little rain that year, it was amazing just how well plants and animals responded to our care.

We attracted masses of white butterflies, so one of the first tasks after arriving was to check each plant for eggs and small caterpillars. Garlic spray does discourage the butterflies somewhat

but does not entirely. The birds also took quite an interest in what we were doing. Most of our green manure, other seeds and many newly planted seedlings, plus the worms which were foolish enough to stay close to the surface, were



Above: Inside Dickson garden looking towards the shed and pond.

Photo: JP

removed by birds. Chicken wire protected quite a bit but not along the edges. We are still working on this. The grubs in the soil also fared very well. Each time the top soil was loosened, a wonderful crop of fat, succulent scarab grubs came to light which interested the birds enormously. Initially we threw them over the fence for the birds waiting in anticipation but an honorary garden member, a Belgian shepherd dog, also liked them and would lay down close to the weeding area waiting for his treats. He also did his best to chase the birds away.

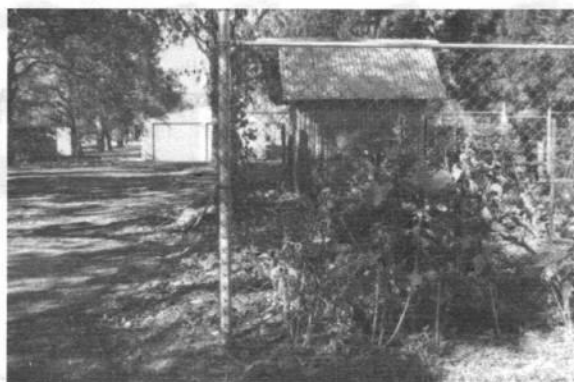
But more than anything we had enormous success with the lawn which had lain dormant or appeared to have died. Even though we weeded and removed the couch in the garden beds and the paths during that year, by the end of the first summer we had lush, green, rich looking paths and choked beds. The removal of well established couch is both back breaking and heart breaking and all efforts appeared to be futile. Something had to be done. So in the garden beds we removed the soil, section by section and removed the easily identifiable stolons. Unfortunately even with all this work, the couch returned. We did some research using the Internet and consulted organic books dealing with this topic. Mostly the advice found was: along the lines of "Make sure that you remove all of the couch as small pieces left behind will grow, and do not put couch in the compost bin." Not a great deal of use as we were taking this approach already!

However, an article dealing with establishing and maintaining a good quality lawn in areas having hot dry summers, recommended including couch grass in the seed mix. It also recommended a neutral to slightly acid soil for growing. With this information we devised a new regime. On the paths we removed the soil and transferred that to the garden beds; then we removed any couch that we could see, watered the surface, spread a reasonable layer of wood ash, watered, then laid cardboard, watered and finally added mulch. In the garden beds, we removed the soil, removed the couch, watered, applied a layer of wood ash (less than on the paths) and damp newspapers, and then replaced the soil. The worms absolutely loved this treatment and we saw an increase of worms in the paths and the beds. Although this did not entirely clear the couch, it was obvious that it reduced it to the point whereby the removal of any new emerging plants was no longer back breaking work. We have now more or less solved the problem but have remained vigilant.

It is one thing to remove couch from existing areas, it is something else to prevent it from returning. Obviously, where it has been a problem in the past, it will be a future problem again unless measures are taken to prevent this. A decision we made right from the start was to not have grass paths. Although by using mulch we have increased the incidence of slugs, this has not been a major problem to date and is easily managed by looking regularly in areas where they seem to congregate and removing them. This also has eliminated the need for installing barriers, neither affordable nor wanted because we may want to change the layout of the beds.

Couch will return to the garden either through stolons entering from outside the area or by seed. Where seeds germinate the couch is easily removed along with other weeds, although I have not been certain that the grass seedlings are couch. The stolons creeping back into the cultivated areas are a little more difficult. What we have done is cultivate an area outside the fence about a foot wide and then hill the soil against the fence. Although this was not easy work, it is paying off. By regularly checking this boundary and removing material from the ditch thus created, eradication is taking less and less time. We have planted the outside barrier area with lupins and Jerusalem artichokes. Future plans include adding sunflowers for the birds, calendulas for colour and beneficial insects, and lucerne for cutting for mulch.

Our overall objective with this garden is to create a wonderful harmonious space to be in, an opportunity to learn from each other and a place



Above: Hilling against the outside fence to discourage the return of couch. Photo: JP

where we can experiment with different ways of doing things. Some of the things that we have tried have not been very successful—we still have no frogs but someone told me it may take three years or more—but this particular one has paid off! Couch is no longer a major problem.

Bebby Bros

Beautiful Holiday House

Just across the road from the beach at Garden Bay over the hill from Malua Bay surf beach.



Two minutes walk to sandy beach good for swimming, snorkelling, or teaching children to swim. Easy drive to many other lovely beaches. House sleeps eight, large fenced garden where children can play within sight.

Pets welcome.

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Telephone Brian or Jackie on 6254 4977 for bookings and prices.

Congratulations Betty!

COGS congratulates COGS Life Member Betty Cornhill on this year being made a Life Member of the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA).

Photo Below Left: Betty working in her Cotter garden on Open Day on 3 April 2005.

Photo Below Right: Betty Cornhill with George Devrell, NASAA Chair and CEO at the Cotter community garden in November 2004.

Photos by JP.



Letter to NASAA

To George and the NASAA Committee

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for making me a Life Member of NASAA. This is a great honour, and I will be delighted to get the newsletter, and keep track of what's going on in the wider world of Organics.

Thanks to eating mostly raw vegetables and fruit, all grown organically, I am well and active, but my age has been brought home to me by the Pope's death. I've just found out he was the same age as me. However, I intend to live quite a lot longer, and remain active for a good many years yet.

It was really great fun meeting you, George, and the gift of money for COGS to replace some of the tools and things lost in the fires was very welcome.

Our new President is Adrienne Fazekas, whom you met. She was our Treasurer when you met her, an excellent one, and she will make a very dedicated and dynamic President.

I have written a little article about the start of NASAA for the COGS Magazine, Canberra Organic, and will enclose it for your magazine

as we exchange articles from time to time. You met Janet Popovic, the Editor of Canberra Organic. She was the one who took the photos, the one who talked about sailing and who brought the refreshments!

We have just had an Open Day at the Cotter Garden, and my plot is looking a little tidier than when you saw it, as I spent 3 hours a day the week before digging out couch grass and tidying my plot.

You did not see the Garden at its best, but then it is the oldest of our gardens. However your visit and the Open Day have made some of us feel that we must do more to make it like its old self. More herbs in the herb garden, more flowers in the flower beds. Andy, our Convener, has already allocated most of the neglected plots to newcomers, and that has made quite a difference.

I hope you will find time to visit us again, and also to visit some of the other groups who helped to start NASAA.

Yours Sincerely,

*Betty Cornhill
10 April 2005*

NASAA: Early Days

One day Rose Walters, who was President of the Canberra Organic Growers Society (at that time The Organic Gardening and Farming Society of the ACT) rang me to tell me that Carl Hoipo in Sydney had advised her that a meeting was being arranged at his house to set up an organisation to certify organic produce Australia-wide.

The idea was to get representatives from all the bodies, small and larger, which had grown up like mushrooms all over the country. These were people who had known about the dangers of all the chemicals being used for producing larger and larger amounts of food to feed the starving people of England and Europe. We were all wanting to go back to the way our grandfathers had produced food, WITHOUT all these chemicals. We were all as keen as mustard (to use a phrase we used in Bermuda in the 1920's and 30's).

Rose was very excited about this idea. She could look ahead and see what an important step forward it would be to have an organisation to certify that organic produce being sold was really organic and to allow farmers who were producing food in this way to benefit by getting a better price for it.

Organic farming in those days was cheaper than conventional, as you did not have to pay for large quantities of insecticides and weedkillers, but, as I knew from my own organic farm, you had to order rock phosphate from the factory which made superphosphate, then take your own truck to the factory in Wollongong to fetch it. I hired a car trailer to take extra to make the trip worthwhile. Unfortunately a wheel came off the trailer on the way back, and the men had to leave our precious rock phosphate at the side of the road. I felt they should have coped with it themselves. We were lucky it didn't "walk".

I was about to pay a visit to my father in England at that time and could not represent OGFSACT at the first meetings, but as soon as I returned Shirley and Peter Carden, who had been our reps, asked me to take their place, and David Odell, who had just set up his organic farm, agreed to be the other rep.

Mike Lubke*, President of the Organic Growers of NSW, had helped our group to get started, by

coming to a meeting of the Natural Health Society of Australia in Canberra and talking enthusiastically about the dangers of chemicals and the benefits of Organics. His enthusiasm was enormous, and I soon had a list of 70 people who were interested in forming a group.

Mike and his wife, Joyce, had also organised the first Organic Festival at Luddenham Showground, where hundreds of us spent an exciting weekend listening to speakers and seeing demonstrations of worm farming, compost making and other things.

Mike was also one of the leaders in the discussions which went on at Carl's house in Sydney. Mike had a very loud voice and very definite views on all subjects, but especially on the formation of this new group which was going to certify all organic farms in Australia.

But Mike found his match in argument in a young lady called Sandy Fritz. Sandy had just come back from the United States, where she had beaten Mike in standing up at the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) Conference in California, to put forward the idea of having the next IFOAM Conference in Sydney. Sandy represented the HDRA, the largest group of organic growers in Australia. She had not co-ordinated her bid with Mike and did not tell him what she was going to do, taking him by surprise, and her bid was voted down. As it happened we were not properly organised for that Conference, and Mike never saw his dream fulfilled. He was a world leader in Organics, even after he was in his nineties.

Mike and Sandy seemed to argue over every little point in the setting up of the organisation for certifying and when the first meeting of that group was arranged Mike had somehow been eliminated from representing the Organic Producers Council of NSW and ACT. I had also been eliminated, and Sandy and Els Wynen from COGS represented OPC at the momentous meeting which set up NASAA.

The inaugural meeting was held at a wonderful Organic Festival held at Geoff Wallace's farm in the Kiewa Valley in Victoria. This Festival was set up on the lines of the two Organic Festivals organised by Mike Lubke at Luddenham and at

Colo River with speakers on organic type subjects. I still have my notes from these talks.

The final argument for Sandy was about whether the new organisation should be called "Organic" or "Sustainable" and Sandy managed to win that one too. I asked to speak on that subject, as I was sitting in on the meeting, and she allowed me to speak for "Organic". However, I was not allowed to vote, as I was not officially a rep, and Sandy, as Chairman, had the casting vote, so the new group became the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia.

Now that NASAA had been set up, it needed money to do its job, so each producer's group under its jurisdiction contributed a certain amount from its own coffers to keep it going and OPC then elected 2 members to represent the group to sit on the committee of NASAA along with the members from Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, so that all the Eastern States except Queensland were represented. (I think I have remembered this correctly.)

The OPC of NSW and ACT set up a system whereby each member paid \$1 per member of its own group and this money went to NASAA, so that HDRA Aust paid in \$600, OGFSACT (now COGS Inc., thanks to Shirley and Peter Carden) paid in \$300, and the Organic Growers of NSW and other smaller groups paid according to their membership numbers.

OPC, the New South Wales and ACT group continued to hold meetings and get speakers such as Kate Short, who gave a hard hitting talk on the dangers of the lethal chemicals being used on conventional farms. I continued to take videos of the meetings, and to be the rep for COGS until finally the COGS Committee decided it could use the money more effectively by starting community gardens in Canberra, of which I had already helped to start six.

Canberra has become well known for its organic community gardens. New Committees have taken on the work of applying for grants and fulfilling the necessary conditions that go with them.

I have also pushed the idea at IFOAM Conferences in New Zealand, Denmark, Switzerland, Canada and in the City of Bath in England, our home for ten years before we moved to Australia.

I have taken visitors from Japan, Hong Kong,

Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Bermuda to visit some of the gardens, and many have started gardens on their own when they returned.

The Organic Community Garden in Bath is now very large with 50 or 60 families gardening there. They have a pond and an orchard, with espaliered apple, pear and other fruit trees, and visitors are made welcome, and allowed to pick and taste the fruit.

The lady who runs it at present was there when we arrived last year, taking some time from her gardening to show us around. She is very enthusiastic about organic growing, and I think it is very important for the future to encourage people who are enthusiastic for a cause such as this.

Betty Cornhill

**In Canberra Organic Summer 2004, on page 11, I incorrectly referred to Mike Lubke as Mike Luke. My apologies, and thanks to Betty for picking this up. JP*



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Farmers' Markets— the vital link between producer and consumer



A Canberra Farmers' Market stall—photo by B Bradey

Farmers' Markets have been popping up all over the country over the last few years—there were over 80 at last count. Finally such a market was established in Canberra this time last year and I've been a regular visitor ever since. It's often difficult to find the time, water, land and enthusiasm to grow even a modest percentage of my fresh food needs. The farmers' market picks up where the backyard or community garden vegetable growing leaves off. Between the backyard and the market, I now hardly ever buy fruit and vegies from the 'fresh food people'. I never thought they were all that fresh or good value for money anyway. I introduced my mother-in-law to the market recently. For \$40 she filled her kitchen with produce which would have cost her twice as much and been half as fresh if bought from a supermarket.

The markets provide a wonderful opportunity to purchase fresh produce directly from the growers. Fork to fork as they say—from the garden fork to the table fork. The Rotary Club of Hall operates the markets upon the following principles :

Fresh produce—Stallholders must have substantially grown, produced or raised the fresh produce they are selling.

Processed products or small livestock—The principal ingredient of value-added products or small livestock at the markets must have been grown, produced or raised by the stallholder.

Reselling—Stallholders selling on behalf of themselves or a producer may do so as a bona-fide agent of the producer, but actual reselling of produce obtained from a commercial market is NOT allowed.

There must be an unbroken link between the grower and the customer. Stallholders must display a sign indicating the source of the produce if they didn't grow it themselves. Farmers' markets in other states often disallow resellers, but there are one or two such stalls in this category in the Canberra Farmers' Market. They don't always display signs, but are pretty easy to spot—just look for the stalls selling bananas from Queensland or pearly white garlic from China!

The markets attract a large variety of growers from around the region:

- apples from the mountains
- stone fruit from Araluen
- seafood and salad vegetables from the coast
- breads and meat from inland areas
- olives from Hall
- chinese vegetables from Cowra
- eggs from Burra

When the markets first started, I was expecting a limited range of products, however I was pleasantly surprised to find the produce on offer reflects the diverse climatic conditions of the region. While you will be hard pressed to pick a

ripe tomato in Canberra before the end of January, growers on the south coast have a frost-free advantage which enables them to sell tomatoes much earlier. What you won't find (except occasionally at the reseller stalls) is produce which doesn't grow in this region at all. So this means very little tropical fruit such as bananas, pineapple or avocado. You can either do without or compromise by purchasing something which has been trucked halfway across the country (or world!) for your eating pleasure. Normally I'm happy to do without.

Produce is generally seasonal, with prices and availability changing throughout the year. It's good for your budget and health to choose fruit and vegetables in season. No cold store apples or cherries shipped from the USA in the middle of winter at these markets thank you very much. If it's growing somewhere in the region, it's on the stalls. Otherwise you do without. The range of produce will diminish during winter and early spring, but that's the time to raid the pantry for the surplus produce you preserved from the previous season.

Another great aspect of the markets is the opportunity to speak with the growers themselves. They are passionate about their produce and offer information regarding the growing methods and how best to consume the produce. Depending on how ripe the peaches are when picked, you can expect advice such as "Let your peaches ripen on the kitchen bench for two days. Put whatever you don't eat after three days in the fridge but not before. They will keep in the fridge for another week. Make jam if you still haven't eaten them after the week in the fridge." Now try getting that sort of advice from your average supermarket! The produce is ripened in the field and not artificially after picking which means it lasts much longer



A Canberra Farmers' Market stall—photo by B Bradey

than shop-bought produce. Some growers display signs telling you when the produce was picked. It's not uncommon to see 'picked yesterday' signs. I once saw a 'picked today' sign. Somebody must have been up pretty early in the morning to pick, pack and transport all before the 8am start!

More than half of the 40 or so stalls claim to use organic methods but only a handful of these stall holders are actually certified as organic. For the non-certified growers, you are basically trusting that their claims are true. Many people place a higher value on local and seasonal produce than certified organic, as long as the consumer has the opportunity to discuss the cultivation methods directly with the grower. The consumer can then decide whether the method is acceptable to them rather than being forced to take the black and white 'certified organic' or 'conventional' options. There is always middle ground and judging by the success of the markets, many are prepared to choose this. As for the totally non-organic growers, you can let the growers know directly what you think of conventional produce. Change will come if enough people demand it. I recall asking one grower if his produce was 'organic'. He replied that it was, because he grew the plants in the ground. Some people have a lot to learn but thankfully there aren't many like him at these markets. I have noticed stallholders starting to put up signs with photos and information about their farm. This helps to reinforce the sense of pride they have in their business.

Anybody concerned about globalisation would do well to shop at these markets in order to maintain a sense of control over what and how they eat. Deep down we are all concerned about the livelihoods of small farmers and realise that we, as consumers, have an important part to play in supporting sustainable agriculture.

As COGS members you all know the benefits of eating fresh and healthy food. So keep growing your own fruit and vegetables at home or in a COGS plot. But consider the farmers' market to cover any shortfall before heading down to the local supermarket. The markets are held every Saturday from 8am – 11am in Exhibition Park at Mitchell. Bring your green shopping bags (plastic bags are a definite no-no at these markets) and arrive early for the best selection.

Ben Bradey

Gwandalan—Haven of Plenty, Organically Grown



View to surrounding hills from the vegetable garden



Annie and Greg with a garden sculpture character

On Easter Monday I was privileged to be invited with my family to visit *Gwandalan*, a beautiful organic garden in a tiny town about an hour north of Melbourne. This is a two acre property that nestles in an attractive undulating landscape of small farm/ hobby farm holdings that has however experienced a number of significantly lower than average rainfall years. It is the home of Annie and Greg. The photo album shows that twenty-five years ago there was just a new house and bare shadeless ground. Now when you turn into the driveway you enter a lush welcoming haven that is its own world, but that occasionally lets you glimpse reminders of the surrounding landscape in which it has burgeoned. The garden participated in the 2004-2005 Open Garden Scheme, opening to the public for two days in November 2004.

railing; chooks, ducks, pigs, a few Wiltshire Horn (no shearing) meat sheep; peaceful water areas abounding with frogs and ornamental fish; small bird havens; cool garden nooks shared by humans, plants, wildlife and sculptured 'characters', all within a wonderful array of familiar and not so familiar trees, shrubs, perennials and creeping ground covers. It is a haven also for injured wildlife—Annie is currently caring for two grey kangaroo joeys (cradled indoors in hanging pouches of soft material) and three wombats (housed in outside pens but not averse to nuzzling into those offering to nurse them). And of course there's also the lovely family pet dog.

Greg recalls that over 100 loads of compost were imported in the early years to get things growing.



Wombat nestling into Greg with Annie looking on



Young piglets from the resident sow

It's the sort of place many COGS members have probably dreamed of creating—getting close to total self-sufficiency—a huge production of organically grown vegetables in separate parterre and sprawling bed areas; fruit trees, including some apples being espaliered along a dividing

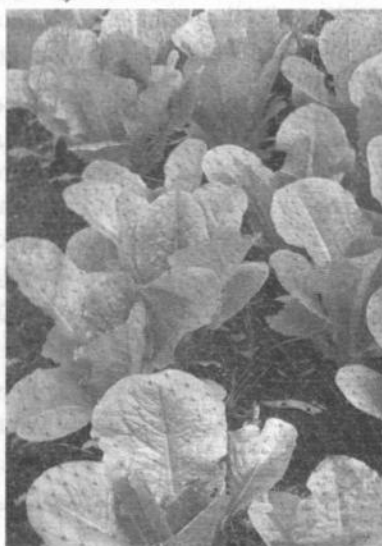
And composting continues to be a major activity—all the spent vegetable material, manures from the on-site animals as well as from a local egg-producer, leaves and prunings are piled and stored then shredded and compiled into windrows for hot compost-making. Compost-

starter plants such as comfrey, yarrow and chamomile are included. Annie gets a real thrill out of the heating process and energetically turns the compost every five days when the composting is in full swing, while Greg generally does the spreading of the compost and mulches on the beds. That's supplemented by liquid manures diluted from the prolific worm farm contained in an old bath and from Annie's "witches brew" of animal manures, weeds and other green plants.

When we visited in late March the larder was being filled with jars of tomatoes, tomato paste and sauce as well as preserved fruit, mainly plums—beautifully turned and packed in glass

visit. Seedlings of lettuce, spring onions and silverbeet had been planted and carrots and brassicas established. The second crop of corn had yet to be harvested and there was a wonderful expanse of zucchini and pumpkins. Yes, there is enough to supply a local restaurant as well as to eat fresh and as preserves at home!

As well as being addictive a garden such as this is demanding—hard to leave in more ways than one, but where do you find someone to look after all the plants and animals while you go on holiday? I was very surprised that Annie's response to my question *What next?* was that it's not beyond the realms of possibility that she would start again somewhere else—transferring



Zucchini sprawl in front of the eucalypts; lettuce plants 4 weeks old; re-sprouting red cabbage in the vegetable parterre.

jars. On the kitchen bench was a superb very large glass container filled with semi-dried tomatoes in oil (spoonfuls of this tomato preserving oil are used in cooking). Above the bench hung strings of garlic and dried chillies, and masses of drying bayleaf and marjoram.

There's always plenty of work to do so WWOOFers participate; Yoshi and Muko from Japan were staying a few weeks at the time of our

the learning experiences of the last 25 years and moving to something larger that could incorporate a gradual release program for the joeys and wombats as they make a full recovery! I don't believe it would happen but I greatly admire her drive for ongoing creativity.

Thank you Annie and Greg for this glimpse into the little paradise you have worked with nature to create.

Janet Popovic



frog pond

formal pond

close up of informal pond edge

Joyce Wilkie talks to COGS about planting for winter produce

At the February 2005 COGS general meeting Joyce Wilkie gave an enthusiastic and inspiring presentation on making the most of autumn planting opportunities to ensure blissful winter eating. She pointed out that instead of making summer vegetables the main focus, or only focus, of the vegetable garden we should know our cool climate region and grow for it to achieve year round harvests.

Space needs to be left in summer beds to give a good start to the winter crop of brassicas—cabbages, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, as well as the large heading and bunching Asian Greens. The greatest impediment to growing through winter is not the cold and frosts but rather the short daylight hours between May and August. With daylight hours reduced plants are not able to photosynthesise and growth is limited. However our winter climate is fantastic for storage and plants that have had a good start in the warmer weather will slow down and hold over the cold months. September is a problem for us when the cool-loving plants bolt to seed with the first warmth.

Joyce exhorted us to be *organised* to plant at the right times and to be *adventurous* in trying to grow the full range of Asian Greens. The small varieties—red and white oriental turnips and the leafy greens, are fast growing and not so sensitive to day length but love cool weather and will bolt with the heat also. She recommended looking out for seeds of lesser known plants such as senposai, with leaves something between silverbeet and cabbage, for example in the New Gippsland Seed Farm, Eden or Diggers catalogues, in Asian groceries and shops such as Tutto Continental at Mawson which sells interesting seed packs.

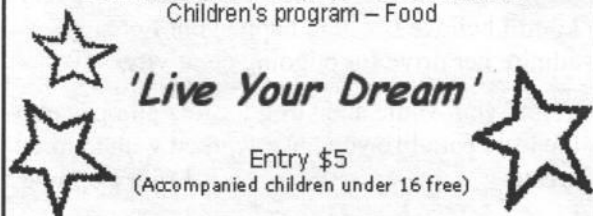
To help us Joyce has provided us with the summary notes and table on page 25. Another excellent resource to get gardeners organised is the set of monthly planting cards that come in the Allsun CD. Joyce donated five laminated copies of her planting guide to the COGS meeting and these were lucky door prizes at the AGM—thanks Joyce!

So if you have planted your Asian Greens in time, enjoy your blissful winter eating. And if not, be ready to plant them very early in Spring!

2005 Sapphire Coast Field Days

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Allsun Garden Farm

Growing Annual Vegetables CD-Rom

Photographic Growing Manual for Gardeners
Home Gardens . Market Gardens
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Purchase from the Allsun Farm/Gundaroo Tiller website at www.allsun.com.au where you can also view a demonstration copy of the CD.

Garden tools also available including the Ho-Mi Asian cultivating tool.

Asian Greens






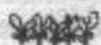
The common connection between these leafy greens is that they are all Brassicas (members of the cabbage family). Centuries of breeding and interbreeding throughout Asia has resulted in a diversity of shapes, sizes and names that are very confusing to westerners. The secret as a gardener is to be adventurous because all of these greens are easy to grow and can provide a range of tasty leaves suitable for cooking or salads throughout the year in Canberra gardens.

Seeds can be planted directly into the ground from spring through to autumn. However, early spring sowings and late summer and autumn sowings work best as all the plants tend to bolt in hot weather.

The plants mature fast and must be harvested quickly once mature so small regular sowings are necessary

As with all members of the cabbage family the plants are susceptible to attack from cabbage white moth. The following table is a simplified summary of this large group of vegetables. There is actually a continuous spectrum from the hard, ball shapes of Bok-choi through to the leafy open mustards so the boundaries are somewhat arbitrary.

For more information consult Joy Larkcom's definitive book "Oriental Vegetables" (John Murray 1991)

TYPE	VARIETIES	DESCRIPTION
Heading 	Bok choi Michihili	Tight headed 'Chinese cabbages' that can be tall and cylindrical or more barrel shaped. Best planted in February to give good tight heads that hold well into winter. Earlier sowings tend to bolt. Use: Best cooked – stir fried or steamed
Bunching 	Pak Choi (White stemmed Green Stemmed & Baby) Tatsui	Distinguished by the thick edible stem. All of the plant is edible including the flower stalks. Best sown in spring and autumn. Use: Mature plants are best cooked young leaves are suitable for salads
Loose Leaf 	Komatsuna Senposai Mustards Green Wave Red Giant	Extremely hardy, open leaved types. Can be sown any time from very early spring through to late autumn. The leaves are picked one or two at a time at any stage of growth (the same as silverbeet). Some varieties are mild and tender, others more pungent and peppery Use: Leaves are cooked as you would silverbeet.
Flowering 	Hon Tsai Tai (purple) Kailan (Chinese Broccoli) Choi Sum (flowering Pak Choi)	Grow summer and autumn. Stems, including leaves and flower buds are harvested and the plants left to regrow. Use: Cooked
Salad 	Mizuna (serrated leaf) Mibuna (straight leaf)	Thin stemmed Japanese salad greens. Can be grown any time from early spring through to late autumn. Use: The tender young leaves and stems are delicious raw.
Baby Leaves 	All of the above (and more!)	A few short rows of closely spaced seed planted every two weeks throughout most of the year will provide succulent cut and come again salad greens when the plants get to between 100mm and 150mm tall.

The summary text and table above is reproduced with Joyce Wilkie's permission from the Allsun Garden Farm Growing Annual Vegetables CD-ROM by Joyce Wilkie and Michael Plane.

Library Report

Firstly, I want to thank all those members who return their library books by the due date or contact me to make other arrangements to return books. It makes my job so much easier. It is also a great help if you have your membership card with you when you borrow or return books.

You may have noticed the number of library books has been increasing lately. New books have been added on the subjects of organic principles, garden design, propagation, food plants and herbs. This year we intend to add more books about identifying pests and diseases, organic pest and disease control and books about growing specific families of food plants such as Brassicas, Cucurbits and Solanums (tomatoes, peppers). If you have any suggestions regarding titles or subjects please let me know.

Some recent library acquisitions are:-

- | | | |
|----------|---|--------------|
| Title: | <i>Asian Herbs & Spices</i> | No 171 P H |
| Author: | Wendy Hutton | |
| Subject: | A small book which clearly describes a number of herbs and spices commonly used in South East Asian cooking. English and botanical names are given for each illustrated herb or spice as well as some common Asian names. Some recipes are also included. | |
| Title: | <i>Mr Fothergill's Growing from Seed</i> | No 173 P Se |
| Author: | Editor: Diana Hill | |
| Subject: | An illustrated list of flowers, herbs and vegetables commonly grown in the home garden. Although some information is given on seed raising techniques, the emphasis is on growing seedlings. | |
| Title: | <i>Antioxidants: a health revolution</i> | No 174 P He |
| Author: | Carolyn Lister | |
| Subject: | An easy to read book for the non scientist about vitamins and other beneficial elements necessary to combat free radicals. | |
| Title: | <i>Citrus for Everyone</i> | No 175 P Fr |
| Author: | Bruce Morphet | |
| Subject: | Information covers a variety of citrus fruits, their growing needs, pests, diseases and remedies. | |
| Title: | <i>Propagation Basics</i> | No 178 P |
| Author: | Steven Bradley | |
| Subject: | This book takes the reader through necessary hygiene procedures, tools and techniques used for different types of cuttings. There are also sections on seed saving and propagation from seed. | |
| Title: | <i>The Earth Gardener's Companion - 2nd Edition</i> | No 179 GO |
| Author: | Jackie French | |
| Subject: | In Jackie French's inimitable style, a month by month guide to organic gardening for self- sufficiency. Topics covered include: what to Plant, Harvesting, Other jobs, Pests to look for and Preventative Measures and Control. Information about individual plants, recipes, facts and tips, companion planting and much more. A very enjoyable read. | |
| Title: | <i>Paradise in your Garden</i> | No 184 GO Pe |
| Author: | Jenny Allen | |
| Subject: | This book, kindly donated by a COGS member, is subtitled "Smart Permaculture Design". It is not a design manual but rather a personal account of the creation of a garden using Permaculture principles. Although the garden is in sub-tropical Queensland with a climate so unlike ours, this book is still informative, well illustrated and a joy to read. | |

Happy reading for the year.

Beby Bros

Seed Saving

Saving seeds assists us all in our pursuit of perfect organic vegetables and enables us to preserve the good characteristics and varieties of our plants for future crops. Members are encouraged to collect seeds from vegetable varieties they have had success with and to share them with the COGS community.

When saving seeds, it is best to choose individual plants that exhibit the desired varietal characteristics and mark them to be used for seed saving. Strong, healthy, disease and insect resistant plants which produce large amounts of harvestable material (fruit, flowers or leaves) are ideal. Whilst this means that the best specimens are not harvested for use this season it does mean that in later seasons the quality of the whole crop should improve.

Desirable qualities may include good flavour and/or texture, large numbers of fruit or large individual fruits, plants that are slow to produce flowers (for those that are eaten prior to flowering such as lettuce and coriander) or fast to produce flowers (for those whose fruits are eaten such as corn or capsicums). Also when growing a crop to save seed, it is important to remove any plants that have undesirable characteristics before they form flowers, as cross-pollination can occur and transfer these characteristics to the seeds of other plants.

Species of plants have different pollination methods and different degrees of cross-pollination are possible. It is important to understand how pollination occurs in the plants you are saving seeds from and to ensure that it only occurs between the specimens that you wish it to.

This can be controlled by physically isolating plants that are likely to cross-pollinate (such as different types of chillies) using either barriers, cages or distance, or by hand-pollinating and bagging. For more information on seed-saving techniques see "The Seed Savers Handbook" by Michel and Jude Fanton.

Tomatoes are a good vegetable (well fruit really) to begin seed saving with. They are self-pollinating with very low rates of cross pollination and they produce hardy seeds that last several years if stored correctly.

When selecting tomato plants for seed saving choose strong healthy plants that produce a lot of fruit, and do not have any obvious problems such as discoloration of leaves or insect infestations. It is not necessary to save all the fruit from the selected plants, however the fruits from the lower branches are best for seed-saving as they ripen first. It is best to collect a few fruit from each of several different plants to ensure genetic diversity is maintained.

Once the plants have been selected and marked, leave the fruit that is to be used for seeds on the plant until it is very ripe. Cut the tomatoes open and collect the seeds with the gel that surrounds them and put in a glass jar with a little bit of water. Leave to ferment for a few days, pour into a sieve and wash/rub the seeds under water until clean. Dry the seeds out of the sun for several days until thoroughly dried. Store in a glass jar or other airtight container for up to 3-4 years.

Ray Harber

COGS seeds currently available at most meetings include:

Apple cucumber	Capsicum, Hungarian yellow	Coriander	Spring onion
Artichoke, globe	Capsicum, large sweet	Dill	Tomato, black Russian
Asparagus	Carrot	Lettuce, cos	Tomato, Grosse Lisse
Basil, thai sweet	Celery	Onion, spanish	Tomato, Tommy Toe
Bean, green & purple climbing	Chilli, habanero, jalapeno	Pea, Greenfeast	Zucchini, rondo
Bean, Scarlet runner	Chives	Pumpkin, Qld blue	Zucchini, yellow

or contact Ray by email at: ray.harber@gmail.com

COGS Backyard - Xeriscape Gardens

At COGS Backyard the brassica bed is fully planted with broccoli, chinese broccoli and rocket, the cucurbit bed is fully planted with green manure and the legume bed is currently being planted with peas and broad beans. The next working bees will be held on May 28, to finish clearing the summer crops, and July 3 to prune the soft fruits and prepare the garden for spring planting.

Thank you to the following members who have helped at recent working bees: Ben Bradey, Beby Bros, Martin Butterfield, Adrienne Fazekas, Robin McKeown, Ilya Popovic, Janet Popovic, Alan Robertson, Malcolm Sherrin, Judy Tier and one other member who helped on 9 April - sorry I didn't get your name. JP

Special thanks to Garry Thomas who currently spends Thursday mornings looking after the garden.



Robin McKeown, Adrienne Fazekas and JP were the working bee on this day in March. Photo by JP.

Slow Food – The End of the Organic Food Chain?

Whether standing at a barbecue, sitting cross-legged on a tatami mat or seated in an elegant restaurant, eating is fundamental to living. Elevating the quality of our food and taking time to enjoy it is a simple way to infuse our daily lives with joy. This is the philosophy of the Slow Food movement.

With food so central to our daily lives, it naturally follows that what we eat also has a profound effect on our surroundings—the rural landscape, farming and food processing practices and, ultimately, the biodiversity of the earth. For a true gastronome, it is impossible to ignore the strong connections between plate and planet.

The Slow Food movement was founded in Italy in 1986 and has become an international non-profit organisation with more than 800 local branches or “convivia” with more than 80,000 members in 104 countries. Through its understanding of gastronomy as it relates to politics, agriculture and the environment, the international Slow Food movement has become an active player in agriculture and ecology. Slow Food links pleasure and food with awareness and responsibility. Slow Food’s activities seek to defend biodiversity in our food supply, spread the education of taste, and support the producers of quality foods through events and promotions.

Late in 2004 a local branch was established, called Slow Food Canberra – Capital & Country Convivium (or 4Cs). With membership steadily growing, the convivium has arranged a number of functions including a communal slow food picnic at Yarrh Wines, a food and wine tasting at Barocca Café.

Alan Robertson

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Barbara Schreiner - qualified architect-horticulturalist-teacher

CONSULTATIONS & CLASSES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Phone: 6248 8298- Email: barbarakath@hotmail.com

Harvest Night Photos



Produce was brought along by Robin McKeown, Marie Bahr, Betty Cornhill, Ben Bradey and Adrienne Fazekas who each told us about some of the highs and lows of the summer growing season. Centre photo by Betty Cornhill; others by J P.

Open Day Photos



*Top row: Cotter Open Day
Bottom row: Cook Open Day
Photos by JP. See also front cover
and photos of Kambah Open Day on
pages 7-9.*



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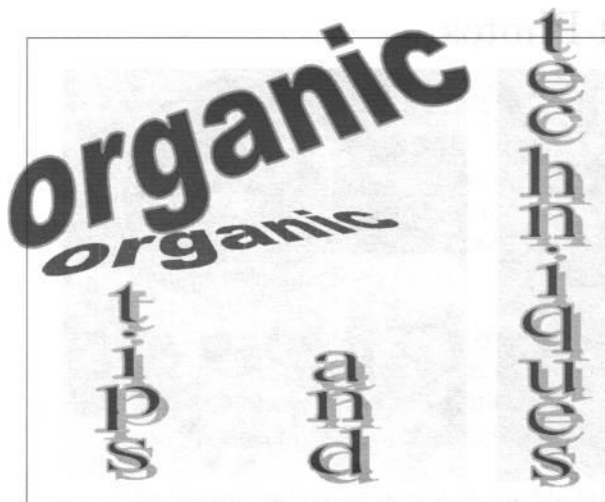


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More on Composting—

I have always been a great fan of compost and have, after years of experimentation, settled on the large (400 litre), black plastic bins. I have three of these in my composting corner and tend to fill them sequentially. The bins are regularly topped with kitchen waste and, at seasonal intervals, with larger amounts of vegetable garden waste, particularly at the end of Summer and Winter. I particularly favour adding a thin layer (about 25 mm) of soil or previously made compost between 75 mm layers of kitchen waste or 150-200 mm layers of drier garden waste. This is an excellent way to rejuvenate degraded soil, speed the composting process, and minimize the risk of kitchen waste turning into an over-wet, smelly mess.

As I lack enthusiasm for a lot of heap turning, I leave the bins for around six months before turning them out onto an open heap. I find the composting process then completes within a couple of weeks, producing fine, rich, crumbly loam. With three bins emptied twice a year I can produce around two cubic metres of compost which well satisfies my needs.

A handy hint: When assembling the large, black plastic bins, put the bolts in backwards, with the nuts on the outside. This allows the bins to be readily disassembled from around the compost.

Source: Alan Robertson, Convener, Cook community garden.

Parsley tips—

- Let parsley plants go to seed in the garden; then scatter seeds in beds to get new seedlings.
- Keep cut parsley fresh and crisp by storing it in a glass of water kept in the refrigerator.

Source: Betty Cornhill, COGS AGM, 22 March 05.

Spring onions—

Pick seed heads of spring onions and place on a new bed to sprout. Thin and transplant by the bunch the new seedlings that form—they will grow in bunches for later convenient harvesting.

Source: Annie from Gwandalan, see p 18.

Water-repellent soil—

Sometimes even healthy soil that has not been watered much, eg while onions are maturing, can become water repellent. Rake the soil so that small furrows form and then water. Adding some shredded lucerne and manure such as pulverised sheep manure will help restore water retention properties.

Marking out tidy sowing strips—

If you feel better when you have neat rows of seedlings find an old plank of appropriate width, place it carefully on the soil, walk over it and then remove it. This gives you good lines for sowing and spacing of rows of seeds/ seedlings.

Source: These two tips come from Laurie Thomson who gardens at Xeriscape.

Loriendale Farm Visit for COGS Members

**Saturday 9 July
1.30-3.30pm**

Bring a pair of work gloves and sharpened secateurs for a pruning practical. If the weather is not clear you will also need to bring good rubber boots and a warm jacket.

Travel along the Barton Highway, past Hall and into NSW. Take the first right hand turn, into Spring Range Rd. Travel 5kms and turn right into Carrington Rd (the roads are now sealed all the way to Loriendale). Loriendale is first on the right, at 16 Carrington Rd where there will be a red apple sign.

If you need transport please ring
Ben ph 6161 0329 or Janet ph 6258 2811.

Note: Owen Pidgeon from Loriendale will be speaking about orchard matters including pruning at the COGS general meeting, 28 June, 7.30pm—see page 31.

Loriendale Orchard Phone 6230 2557.

WINTER VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

Asparagus

Prepare the bed before you buy the crowns to plant in late Winter - early Spring. Since this is a perennial crop which can last for up to 20 years it is well worth the effort of establishing properly. Asparagus needs good drainage and plentiful food and can be planted very successfully in a raised bed enriched with compost and well rotted manure. Seaweed is an excellent mulch. The crowns are planted in a trench, but with the roots straddling a ridge. Cover so dormant shoots are about 4cm below the surface. Do not harvest spears the first year, and only harvest for a few weeks the second year. Remember this is a long-term investment.

Broad Beans

Late plantings of broad beans in June may be very slow to germinate. Better results are usually achieved with an Autumn or early Spring planting.

Kohlrabi

Prepare the soil well with lots of organic matter. Needs rapid growth for flavour.

Lettuce

Only plant Winter varieties of lettuces (cos, salad bowl, oakleaf, butterhead and mignonette varieties)

Onions

Mid season varieties are often sown late Autumn or early Winter and long keeping varieties in Winter. However, the timing of mid or late season varieties is well worth experimenting with by making successive plantings to determine the best time in your specific locality.

Peas

Peas can be planted in August/September for an early summer crop but may be very slow to germinate if the ground is still very cold or wet.



Rhubarb

This is a perennial but plants generally only produce well for a few years, then fresh plants need to be started from subdivided crowns planted in late winter or early spring. It is very hardy, but it is a gross feeder and will appreciate lots of compost or well rotted manure and plenty of water.

Other possibilities

Growers may wish to start a number of crops in late winter rather than early Spring if the winter is mild or if they have a sheltered garden bed. Such crops include Artichokes (Globe and Jerusalem), Beetroot, Cabbage, Carrots, Potatoes and Radish.

Frost-sensitive vegetables such as Capsicum, Eggplant and Tomatoes can be started early in August indoors

but may need a heated glasshouse or warm spot to germinate and will certainly need protection before being planted out in spring.



Winter is the usual time to plant and prune the soft fruits including:

Strawberries:

Plant certified stock or propagate from runners (not from plants more than 2 years old however) in a soil enriched with compost or well rotted manure. Remove old leaves and excess runners to tidy up the plants in winter.

Berries:

Raspberries, youngberries, boysenberries etc can be planted during winter while they are dormant. Remember these bear fruit on canes grown in the previous year so to prune remove all the old canes in autumn or winter making sure to leave the current seasons growth for next years fruit. Autumn fruiting raspberries bear on the current years growth so are cut to the ground in winter after they have fruited.

Currants:

Red, white or black currants are easy bushes to grow in Canberra as they withstand very cold weather and don't mind heavy clay soil. Currants produce a fruit rarely available commercially. They need to be pruned in winter to remove dead wood and around a third of the oldest branches to encourage new growth and allow for good air circulation.

Gooseberries:

Like similar conditions to currants.

Winter Vegetable Planting Guide

	JUN	JUL	AUG
Artichokes		T	T
Asparagus		T	ST
Broad Beans		S	S
Kohlrabi			S
Lettuce			S
Onions	ST	ST	T
Peas			S
Rhubarb		T	T
Silverbeet			S
Snowpeas	T	T	ST
Spinach			S

S = Seed Sowing T = Transplanting

This table is a guide only, so observe the seasonal weather patterns before deciding when to plant, as there will often be distinct differences from one year to the next. The microclimate of your garden will also influence the times when you plant.

Canberra Organic Quick Quiz

1. What can you add to a soil to improve its structure?
2. How else can you improve soil structure?
3. How can you increase the water holding capacity of a soil?
4. How can you encourage earthworms into your soil?
5. List three benefits of using an organic mulch.

Answers are on page 31. Too easy? Send your own quiz and answers for possible publication to editor@cogs.asn.au

COGS Committee Members & Helpers

President	Adrienne Fazekas	6247 5882	afazekas@yahoo.com.au
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Secretary	Ben Bradey	6161 0329	info@cogs.asn.au
Public Officer	Ben Bradey	6161 0329	info@cogs.asn.au
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Librarian	Beby Bros	6248 0063	
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Queanbeyan	Maree Timbs	6297 5379	
Theodore	Richard Reed	6291 1897	rmjreed@ozemail.com.au
<u>Monthly Meetings</u>			
Seed exchange	Ray Harber		
Book sales	Murray Dadds		
Supper conveners	Marie Bahr, Mary Flowers		
Librarians	Beby Bros, assisted by Victor Oates		
Web manager	Ben Bradey		info@cogs.asn.au
Telephone contact	Elizabeth Palmer	6248 8004	
Inquiries about Organic Growing		6248 8004	info@cogs.asn.au

To contact COGS

Email info@cogs.asn.au or visit our website at www.cogs.asn.au

COGS monthly meetings are held on the **4th Tuesday** of each month (except December and January)
at **7:30pm** in **Room 4** of the **Griffin Centre** in Civic
Visitors Welcome



Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

INFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Canberra Organic Growers Society is a non-profit organisation started in 1977 with the aim of providing a forum for organic growers to exchange information and encourage the adoption of organic growing methods. COGS is an association without specific political or religious affiliation as a group. COGS has the following objectives – to:

- Foster the use of organic methods in home gardening, horticulture and agriculture
- Foster organic agricultural knowledge
- Promote the production and consumption of certified organically grown foods and the adoption of recognised organic standards
- Demonstrate and encourage the use of organic growing techniques
- Provide a forum for the discussion of matters of interest to organic growers in the ACT and surrounding region
- Facilitate the exchange of information and ideas between members and with other organic growers
- Assist members in establishing their own organic growing areas
- Administer community gardens operated under organic agricultural principles for recreational, educational or rehabilitation purposes and for the self-supply of contaminant free produce.

ADMINISTRATION

COGS is run by a voluntary committee which is elected annually at the AGM in March. The committee meets monthly and all members are encouraged to consider participating in the work of the committee.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meetings of members are held in Room 4 at the Griffin Centre, Civic, at 7.30 pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month (except in December and January). Each month there is a guest speaker. Recent meeting topics have included Backyard poultry keeping, Worms, Herbs and Seed Saving. At the meetings there is a produce and seed exchange table and a bookstall. COGS seeds and seedlings are often available for purchase. Members may also borrow two items from the COGS library. A light supper is available after the meeting.

Visitors are welcome.

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

Canberra Organic, the quarterly publication of COGS, contains articles on organic growing, informs members of upcoming speakers and events, and includes planting and growing information specifically for the Canberra region. Members are encouraged to contribute articles.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

COGS currently operates 11 community gardens in the Canberra region. Gardens are located at Charnwood, Cook, Curtin (Cotter Garden), Dickson, Erindale, Holder, Kambah, Mitchell (Northside Garden), Oaks Estate, Queanbeyan and Theodore. Members may obtain plots to grow organic produce for home consumption. These gardens provide a wonderful opportunity for people to garden with other organic growers, to share their expertise and learn something new at the same time. Plot holders are required to pay an annual levy to cover the cost of water, insurance, tools and maintenance. The ACT Government has supported the establishment of these gardens through the ACT Office of Sport and Recreation and the Department of Urban Services Community Renewal program.

INTERNET

COGS maintains a web site devoted to organic growing at www.cogs.asn.au. The site contains the COGS information papers on organic growing, seasonal planting guides, certification information, a page for children and links to related organisations and information sources.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

From time to time COGS organises other activities for its members. For example, we participate in the World Environment Day fair and arrange information days at "COGS Backyard". Seminars and workshops are also conducted.

CONTACT

COGS
PO Box 347
DICKSON ACT 2602
Phone: (02) 6248 8004
Email: info@cogs.asn.au
Web: www.cogs.asn.au

COGS NOTICE BOARD

Don't forget to check the COGS website at www.cogs.asn.au for updates and new notices.

Speakers

**Room 4, Griffin Centre, Bunda Street, Civic,
7:30 pm**

24 May 2005

Dr Jonathon Banks, Pialligo Apples, Pialligo
Some Thoughts on Organic Gardening

28 June 2005

Owen Pidgeon, Loriendale Orchard
Orchard Matters, including Pruning

26 July 2005

Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith,
Co-ordinator, National Toxics Network
Living in the chemical cocktail

23 August 2005

Seed exchange evening.

September 2005

Speaker to be confirmed.

25 October 2005

Jackie French

Farm Visits

Saturday 9 July 2005

Loriendale Orchard, 1.30-3.30pm
including pruning practical. See page 26.

Late August—date to be advised.

Allsun Farm, Gundaroo.

COGS Working Bees

COGS Backyard

Saturday 28 May, 2-4pm—see pages 5, 23.

Sunday 3 July, 2-4pm—see pages 5, 23.

*Note in 'Events' above that there is also a
pruning demonstration at Xeriscape on this day.*

www.cogs.asn.au for updates and confirmations.

Events

2 and 3 July 2005

Pruning demonstration, Xeriscape Gardens
Weston, 1pm-3pm

September 2005

15th IFOAM Conference, Adelaide

29/30 October 2005

Sapphire Coast Producers Association's Field
Days, Bega - see page 20.

Saturday mornings, 8am-11am

Farmers Market, EPIC
(enter near Shell service station)

Volunteer Advisers Wanted

Currently two projects are requesting COGS
assistance with gardening/ environment
projects. If you are able to offer some time to
help the Kaleen Early Childhood Centre or the
Lyneham Primary School Environment Centre,
please contact COGS President Adrienne
Fazekas on 6247 5882 or email her at
president@cogs.asn.au

This is one way in which you can assist
building the COGS profile in our community.

COGS Gift Subscriptions

Give a friend 4 issues of

Canberra Organic

\$12

available at COGS general meetings
or contact the editor

Phone 02 6258 2811 or

Email editor@cogs.asn.au

Canberra Organic Quick Quiz Answers

1. Any organic matter - including compost, animal manures and green manures.
2. By the use of organic mulches and rotations including deep-rooted or leguminous plants.
3. By the addition of organic matter.
4. By the addition of organic matter to the soil or the use of an organic mulch.
5. Mulch protects soil from erosion by wind and water, encourages earthworm activity, helps retain soil moisture